

THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

[Extracts from sermons, by Wm. D. Furry.]

During the first six months of the current year, Christian thought will be mainly centered upon the person of Christ as pictured by Luke.

A knowledge of Luke's Gospel, and of the world's present need, together with the present attitude of Christian thought to that need, will exhibit the wisdom displayed in, and the special need of, the selection of this series of lessons at the present time.

Of the four biographies of Christ, Luke deals the most upon the human side of his life. He portrays for us the human growth of the Christ in five views; viz., the fruit of the womb, the babe, the child, the boy, the man.

He presents to us, Christ as the Son of Man, the partaker of our common humanity, the Redeemer of the human family, the author of a common salvation for lost sinners everywhere,—the Saviour of the world.

It is this last which gives to Luke's Gospel its particular coloring. While Matthew makes predominant the fulfillment of prophecy; Mark the manifestation of his power, Luke makes predominant the welcome given to all nations, classes and individuals, to return to the Father's house. Of all the Gospels, his is the most catholic and universal.

"Luke," says Dr. Matheson, is the embodiment of human sympathy." Canon Farrar describes his Gospel as, "the one not only of children and gentiles, the humble, the despised, the blind, the lame, the halt, the maimed, but even of the publican and harlot, the prodigal and outcast; not only of Mary, but of Magdalene; not only of Zaccheus, but of the dying thief." It is the Gospel that represents Jesus as the Saviour of the world.

The weakness of our past, and much of our current Christian thought, and its consequent failure to establish the right relations between and right conditions among men, is the elimination of this human element from Christ's life and teachings.

Mens' minds seem to have been so completely overwhelmed with the grandeur, beauty and glory of the "New Jerusalem," and the darkness and suffering of the "Infernal Regions," that earth and its environments were either forgotten or ignored.

That Christ came to prepare men to live not die; that Christianity must pervade and control secular affairs; that it is to make men like Christ here, and to make earth like heaven, were conceptions, either too high or too liberal (?) for many of our past and present teachers.

Until the reformation of the sixteenth century, the church was considered solely as a *divine* institution, and in consequence of which, limited its sphere of work to divine things only.

Since then, however its *human* relations have been coming more and more noticeable; but she has yet a long way to go to fulfill her mission, outlined so definitely by Christ's life and teachings.

If the church had always attended to the relieving of want and suffering as did the Apostolic church, there would not today exist so many benevolent (?) organizations, drawing from men that activity and enthusiasm, which belongs to and is sorely needed by the church. The many such organizations in the world to-day, are but so many reproaches upon the church, and has been occasioned by the church not doing the work which Christ did and commanded her to do.

To know Christianity is to know Christ and *vice versa*; and to know Christ we must approach him from the human side. There is no irreverence in so doing. The *humanity* of the Son of God is as fundamental an article of Christianity as his *divinity*. It is this view that Luke gives us, and which we should all hold after a careful study of his Gospel.

We are disposed (the result of our teaching and reading) to behold the Incarnation, primarily, as a revelation of God to man in Christ, whereas it is also a revelation of man to man,—the perfect to the imperfect.

The Incarnation was necessary, not only to reveal God, but to give to man a revelation of the ideal man. Thus the Incarnation reveals what man was before the fall; what man may be, to what he can attain, and what man will be when perfected.

Man was made in the image of God is the sublime teaching of Gen. 1: 27; but what that image was, can be known only from the light of that Incarnation.

Our future or perfected is also known from the Incarnation, for we shall be like him. I John 3: 2.

His Incarnation is thus the mystery and glory of Christianity, but that we may see it as such, and draw from it, that inspiration which it gives, it is necessary that we approach it from the human side.

We must look upon him as he is presented to us in the Gospels, and must listen to the words which he speaks to us concerning God and ourselves.

We may draw a mental picture of him, concerning him as being in the world to-day and in our presence, but very possibly we will picture him as being supreme and solitary, standing among men, but tower-

ing high above them. Such is the too current conception, which is narrow and degrading.

But we would not swing to the opposite extreme. Christ is immeasurably above and superior to man; but that superiority does not involve separation from man; for he is most intimately connected to, and closely identified with man in interest and sympathy.

He is above and superior to man because he represents man in his perfected condition; man beholds in him human nature as it is; the defects and deformities being made conspicuous by reflections in him.

In him is our ideal; not only as to what we will be, but what we must be now.

In him there is no one talent or quality which attracts attention, but the rounded completeness of the whole character. An ideal character is found only in the rounded, symmetrical development of the entire character.

The completeness of Jesus' life is seen in the fact of his being a universal man, no peculiarities nor prejudices to be found in him, and that he was sympathetic to the least physical as well as spiritual need of those with whom he came in contact.

Christ then was both human and divine. Both were needed to make a complete Saviour. The picture of his person must be a harmonious blending of the two.

The church has seriously distorted this picture by the elimination of the human element. His first sermon, in the synagogue at Nazareth, which Prof. Drummond has so fitly called "The Program of Christianity," is known to the church only in theory, and that we perceive to be far from its actual meaning; the church needs to know that Christ not alone outlined his earthly ministry, but the mission of the church in every succeeding age.

Wherein the church has accepted her mission in full, the results have been forthcoming. But much is yet to be done in carrying out the spirit of the Gospel, but the times are auspicious.

Jesus not only taught but acted. In this we have the two fold method of the Gospel. It not only teaches the soul, but heals the body. This is the true test of the true Christian, the true minister, the true church.

This is the picture of Christ and his mission as painted by Luke, and which we now study. If we are to be profited from the study, depends upon how we view him.

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It is true wisdom to speak but little of the injuries you have received or the good deeds you have done.—*Christian Leader*